

ADARE MANOR.

BELONGING TO THE RIGHT HON. THE EARL OF DUNRAVEN, K.P.

BY THE LADY ENID WYNDHAM QUIN.



ADARE is situated in the lowest part of the wide plain of County Limerick, encircled, though at some distance, by low, smooth-sloped hills, and with the bright little river Maigne watering its woods and meadows.

Remarkable features of scenery it has none, but it possesses no small share of quiet loveliness. Loveliness consisting chiefly of gentle slopes of emerald sward, noble groups of stately and broad-branched trees, clear and sparkling water winding its way through thickets glowing with the rich crimson of dog-wood, and the gold of graceful osier, and fair glimpses caught here and there of the lifted blue of distant hills, framed in the grave sable of pine-boughs, or the more vivid foliage which crowns the elm and oak. But though Adare would always have been fair and fertile, though nature's hand traced the soft undulations of the ground, and led the windings of the clear river through smiling meadow and dusky wood, and strewed the fields thick with cowslip-gold and anemone-silver—though through nature it receives the invigorating sea-breeze and the refreshing sea-shower, and has the hills cast like a rampart wall around it, yet I doubt if it would have attracted more attention than an ordinary fertile valley, had not its owners bestowed upon it an unusual amount of care and love.

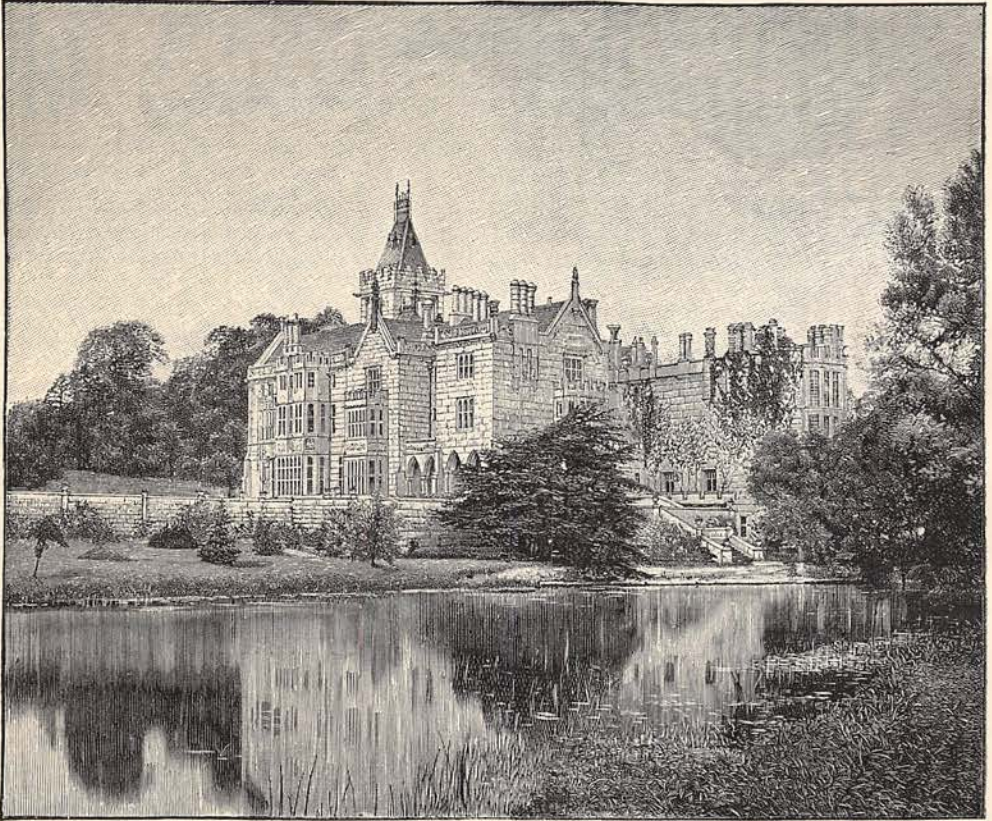
The scenery which impresses us most is certainly that in which nature is seen in her primitive condition. In which we have evidence of her growth and decay, her caprice, her submission to eternal law, unchecked and uninfluenced by human hand, but we also feel a certain pleasure in the contemplation of those scenes whose ordered stateliness and harmonious beauty attest to the labour and skill with which man has developed natural virtues and checked or concealed natural waywardness or disadvantages.

And therefore, I think, I am on the whole justified in asking the reader to leave for a while the more frequently trodden routes of travel in Ireland and accompany me in spirit for an hour's ramble through the woods and by the waters of Adare. I naturally feel some hesitation in doing so, for Adare is my home, and I may easily be led by my affection for it to exalt its simple beauty, and to suppose it more worthy of the attention of others than it really is. My own happiness has been so much increased by the beauty of the simple scenery around me, and my life is so bound up, by association and memory, with that scenery, that I can hardly fail to regard it with an admiration which may appear uncalled for by the casual visitor.

Two things urge me to persist in my attempt to bring before the eyes of the readers of this magazine the scenes which have so pleasantly influenced my own life. The first is, that as those who are really fond of Nature (and for these alone I write) love her in her simple as well as in her sublime aspects, and as Adare does indeed possess a great amount of quiet loveliness, I think that they, coming to enjoy and not to criticise and

compare, may really find some pleasure and interest in the place. The second consists in that feeling, which when we have tasted of a pleasure and found it real and deep, makes us wish for others to taste it too. I have found great delight in the particular woods and waters and flowers of my home, I somehow think that others might find it also. I should like them, if possible, to enjoy what I have enjoyed, and, therefore, in the strength of this and the preceding argument, I invite the reader to accompany me for a short ramble through Adare.

The first object which strikes the eye on entering the demesne is a tall gray tower rising above the trees, and as the house to which it belongs comes more fully in view, we are told by its goodly proportions and fair architecture, that its builder loved the site on which he reared it, and intended Adare to be the home of his race for generations. It is built in the Tudor style but with a certain freedom and originality, and want of adherence to the strict architectural law of any particular age. Those who



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care to read the history which is clearly written on the walls of any noble building will find plenty to interest them in the quaint gargoyles that look down from every angle and "coign of vantage," their demoniac scowls, or ridiculous grimaces frozen and fixed in the gray limestone, and the gracefully carved patterns, and knots of bossy foliage that here encircle the crests of the family, and there fill panels beneath some projecting window, while those who look only at the structure as a whole will not fail to admire its harmony, the beauty of its proportions, and the fair colours obtained by the chequering of its surface with blocks of red and yellowish lime-stone.

As I see, by the number of names entered in the visitors' book, that visitors like to explore the house, I will invite the reader to follow me into the interior of my home, on the chance that it may interest him too. Through a small vestibule, hung round with antlers and brightly blazoned shields, we gain access to the great hall. The stranger's first feeling is, I think, one of astonishment, at the boldness of the designer in seeking to introduce in a dwelling-house those elements of space, height, and

mystery, which help to constitute the sublime, and, on taking a further look round the apartment, one of admiration at the manner in which they have been obtained and combined without unfitting it for domestic uses. For the hall has indeed more the air of an ecclesiastical building than a dwelling-room. Lofty pillars of gray stone support the oaken roof, tall windows filled with stained glass admit the light in streams of gold and crimson, old oak panelling and the deep carving of niche, cornice, and soffit produce an air of mystery and dim richness, while the great organ whose rows of silver pipes gleam in their setting of elaborate tracery still further increases the impression of sacredness and solemnity which the mind at first receives. But on taking a second look we perceive at once that this hall is intended to be very comfortably lived in. In the open hearth of the immense fireplace great white logs and squares of brown turf, supported on brazen fire-dogs, blaze and crackle, the nakedness of the lofty walls is concealed by fine antlers, suits of ancient armour and weapons tastefully grouped and arranged, comfortable furniture, bright flowers, and broad-leaved palms relieve the monotony of gray stone and dark oak, and a minstrels' gallery occupying one side, at some height, suggests pleasant ideas of music and cheerful social gatherings.

Whatever the reader's particular taste may be I think that he is almost sure to find something to interest him in this hall. If he cares for architecture he will admire its proportions, the arrangement of the upholding and dividing pillars, the leading of the staircase through lofty balustrades of carved oak, and the placing of the windows; if he likes carving he will find many a graceful and well-executed pattern or intricate and rich design, wreathing itself within panels or following the course of mouldings; if he takes an interest in antiquities he will be able to study the skeleton of a gigantic elk dug out of a bog in the vicinity, and the numerous swords, bucklers, and curious old weapons, which as we noticed before, decorate the walls, and if it be music that he loves, there is the great organ ready to speak to him with its hundred voices. Perhaps however he may care for none of these things. Pictures may be his hobby, or natural scenery. I will therefore take him, first to the gallery, where one or two good pictures are to be found, and then out into the Park, where he may choose the scenery for himself.

The gallery is reached by a passage and flight of steps in the thickness of the wall, lighted by arched windows looking down into the hall, which has a most picturesque effect. Still more picturesque is the view of the hall afforded by the minstrels' gallery, which we now enter and pass along before opening the tall and wonderfully carved doorways that once stood in some ancient church of Antwerp, but now admit us into the beautiful room we wish to visit. As we enter, we shall, if it is a sunny afternoon, be almost dazzled by the flood of many-coloured radiance which the sun streams through the great western painted window, but when our sight has sufficiently recovered to enable us to look round, we shall at once be struck by the harmony and exquisite proportions of the gallery in which we stand. It is said to be one of the most difficult tasks of the architect to design a gallery so that its proportions shall be pleasing to the eye. In most galleries faults of this kind are not much observed, as they are generally constructed entirely for the reception of pictures and *objets d'art*, which occupy the mind and prevent it from dwelling upon the apartment in which they are contained, but when a gallery is intended for a living-room, as this one at Adare, it becomes a matter of the greatest importance whether the proportions are just and beautiful. That they are so, in this particular gallery, is felt at once by the spectator, however ignorant he may be of the subtle laws which regulate such matters. The room is perfectly harmonious and well balanced, and produces upon the mind that sensation of satisfaction and pleasure which just and fair proportions always give, in whatever object we view them. To say that an apartment is well proportioned is however to give but a very vague idea of its appearance, and I will therefore mention a few of its most important features, before asking the reader to join with me in the admiration which I think is due to its beauty. The dimensions of the gallery are one hundred and thirty-two feet in length, twenty-one feet in breadth, and twenty-six feet in height, and it is lighted by five great bay windows, the upper lights of which are filled with stained glass, setting forth in many a glowing ordinary and glancing field of azure, vert and gules, the alliances formed by the family for many generations.

The window at the east end overlooks the river, whose sweet, subdued murmur is heard unceasingly, imparting a certain pensive restfulness and calm to the place. The ceiling is of oak, with massy bosses, pendants, and pierced spandrils, and has its

cornice upheld by carved shields. Of oak also is the parquet floor, whose smoothness and polish produce almost the effect of water, and by causing it to reflect both the light and the articles of furniture placed upon it, add materially to the beauty of the room. Of oak, too, is the panelling which decorates for a certain height the north side of the wall. This panelling would, I think, very much amuse and interest the reader, could I bring it in all its quaintness before his eyes. The subjects are all taken from the prints in Froissart's *Chronicles*, and if he has ever glanced at that book, the mere recollection of the historical events as there depicted will cause him to smile. More ridiculous still do they appear when carved and arranged in the confined compass of a



THE GALLERY, ADARE MANOR.

panel. Here we have a fierce battle, in which the soldiers are running and fighting on one another's heads, here the scaling of a tower, which must be a comparatively easy business, as the men are as tall as the tower itself—and in this most touching representation of a fair ladye, bidding farewell to her true knight from her bower window, we are unable to feel the true pathos intended, on account of the fear which seizes us lest the fair ladye's voluminous person should overbalance her fragile bower, and both she and the bower be precipitated upon the head of the unfortunate knight. But despite these curious

defects of composition and perspective, and the want of any notion of the relative size of objects, there is great life, freshness, and vigour, in the quaint scenes, and great ingenuity is displayed in the manner in which battles, sieges, and sea-fights are made gracefully to fill their respective panels, and pennons and lance-heads kept within the limit of their encircling pattern.

On the other side of the room stand between the three red marble fireplaces, great carved presses of walnut; and above these as above the panelling, pictures are hung, amongst which the distorted and gloomy trees of Salvator, the dingy green canals by which Canaletti endeavours to represent the glowing "city of the sea," the bright female faces of Kneller, and the delicate forms and exquisite colour of Sir Peter Lely may be distinguished.

But I must not forget to ask the reader to walk down to the west end of the apartment and look up at the high stalls which decorate each side. One set of them was brought from Antwerp, and the other so skilfully copied from it by Adare workmen,

that critical connoisseurs have been unable to tell which was the foreign, and which the Irish work. Very rich in design, and very beautifully executed they are. Round-faced cherubs peep out at us, smiling and sweet even in the dark oak out of which they are chiselled, luxuriant foliage wreaths itself round twisted shafts, conventional ornament, intricate and rich, decorates the projecting cornice and brightly-blazoned shields which in the old Antwerp church set forth the rank and family of each stall, serve to relieve the monotony of the dark wood-carving.

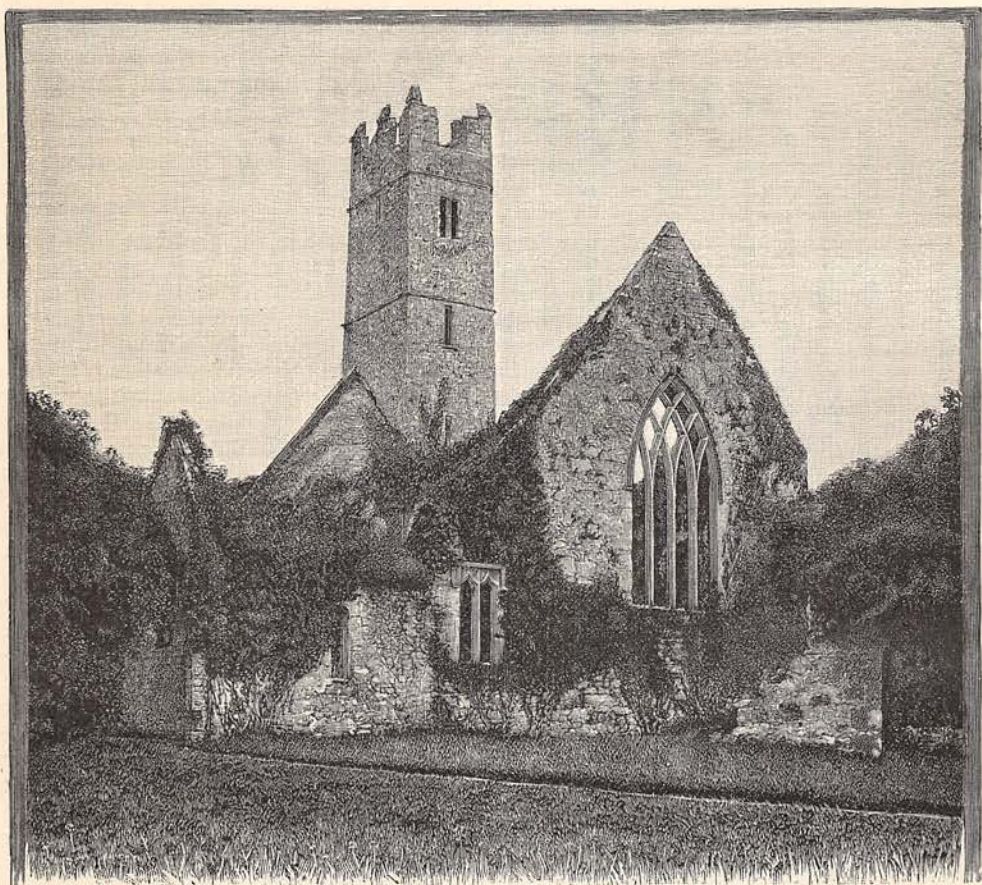
I have now mentioned a few of the features of this gallery, but I do not think that in following me thus from one object to another, the reader can have obtained a clear idea of its general appearance. I would have him pause once more before turning away, and glance down its long perspective, without fixing his eye on any particular spot. He will then, I think, carry away with him the remembrance of a stately, rich and beautiful apartment. He will be impressed by the sense of peace, comfort, and grave grandeur which pervades the scene and, I think, will readily acknowledge that the Adare gallery combines in an unusual manner all that is calculated to elevate the mind, delight the senses, and impart refined enjoyment. I promised the reader that when I had shown him the apartment containing the pictures he should wander about in the park and find for himself the spots which pleased him best, so we will leave the house and I will try and bring before his eyes the most prominent features of the surrounding scenery.

On the southern side of the house flows the Maigne, one of the prettiest little rivers that was ever tossed out of the golden urn of a hillside nymph. It winds through the park in curves and loops of shining silver, now leaping over a weir with mimic jets of spray and bright gushes of hurried water, and foam-crested wavelets playing back on each other's smooth, green slopes—now calming itself for a moment in deep brown pools where the bubbles like great jewels float slowly round and round, and the fins of the fish gleam like silver between the stones—now making its way with difficulty under the tangled boughs of dogwood and osier matted thick above its surface, a safe home for timid moorhen and a nesting-place for the wild duck, and now emerging into light and flowing swiftly and busily between the green banks of the meadows, and round the grassy shores of little islands starred with primroses, or set thick with the quivering silver of snowdrops. Beneath the house it runs very swiftly with a strong, swirling, eddying current down the centre, showing that the real object of the river, despite its wilful wanderings and playful pauses, is to get into the Shannon and out to the sea as soon as possible; but it is yet calm and clear enough to reflect in every ripple either the gray of the towers, or the crimson of the Virginia-creeper upon them, or the sable of the great cedar-branches that almost rest like outstretched hands upon the water.

On the opposite bank of this river the park, broken by one clear line of blue where sleeps a lazy little lake, rises softly to the great wall of trees which shuts out the surrounding world, in winter by a deep brown curtain, in summer by a bright tapestry of varied green. In front of the house lies an Italian garden with regular flights of steps, and dark, pointed cypress-yews bordering straight gravel-paths, and beyond its trimly-kept lawns stretches a long vista of level sward, fenced in by a broad belt of russet wood above whose rounded tops the smooth, blue outline of a neighbouring hill is seen to rise. On the northern side the trees again close in, but are here intersected by numerous winding paths, which lead through grassy lawns embroidered with daisies and by shrubberies ringing with the songs of happy, unmolested birds, to quiet nooks where month by month Flora strews her fairest jewels, and where, from the first frost-pinchd snowdrops to the last brown "lord-and-lady," almost every wild flower may be found. Behind the house are trees again—indeed they are everywhere. The chief beauty of Adare consists in them. Its very name is derived from two words—"Ash-tara"—which means "the ford of oaks." The place seems made that they may display their utmost beauty and grandeur in it. The greensward laid so smooth and level that they may strike their roots deeply and firmly without hindrance—and the clear river led amongst them that they may never lack moisture and due nourishment. Tall elms full of stately majesty, giant oaks, their gnarled boughs hoary with silver lichen—beautiful beeches, their stems gray, and smooth, and rounded as cathedral pillars—larches tufted with emerald and jewelled with rubies; cedars, one mass of solemn sable—all these and many others far too numerous to mention here—rise in proud isolation or group themselves into fair groves on every slope and in every hollow.

Then there are the pines—ranging from the lofty Scotch fir to the splendid *nobilis* with its cone of silver-sprinkled branches—doing good service by giving warmth and colour to the landscape when winter has stripped the other trees of their glowing robes. Colour! ah, that is a great source of beauty at Adare.

I have often noticed that in Ireland Nature's colouring is much brighter and richer than in England, and her effects dependent upon colour, far more striking. The blue of the hills is deeper, the blue of the sky purer, the blue of the water more intense. The sunset clouds are of a more splendid crimson, the rainbow relieves itself more vividly against the deeper gloom of the passing storm—the very sunshine is more full and golden, and the grass and the flowers certainly glow in brighter and fresher tints. This fact lends a peculiar charm to any Irish scene, however devoid of actual beauty it



THE ABBEY CHURCH.

may be ; but when the landscape is already lovely as at Adare, it increases that loveliness tenfold, and becomes an unfailing source of delight to those who appreciate "sacred" colour as Ruskin calls it.

We have now briefly reviewed the surroundings of Adare and noticed some of its characteristics, but I think the reader cannot but feel that despite all the charms lent to it by Nature and developed by loving care, the place must be wanting in real interest if it has no human associations, no tale of human joy and sorrow connected with its name, no ancient legend to give a pathos to rippling river and woodland glade. "Man is the sun of his world," and I think we will find it almost invariably the case that Nature's fairest scenes fail to inspire us with true interest if we cannot read upon them some human record, and connect them with the story of some toiling, struggling human being like ourselves. Our hearts naturally go out in sympathy to our brothers of whatever age or clime, we take keen interest in their successes or failures, their

joys and sorrows, and the scenes which impress us most are generally those which are linked to some story of their lives and deeds. The primeval forest is magnificent, but I have heard it said by many travellers that its majesty soon became oppressive and wearisome to them, and the pine-forests of Jura and the rocky shore of Uri have power to stir our hearts more deeply than all its untrodden aisles, because their trees and rocks, and waters, are hallowed by the memories of noble men, and consecrated by deeds of human heroism. The crumbling walls of some ancient fortress are looked upon by us with deeper interest than the frowning cornice of the great natural cliff, because they were once raised by a man like ourselves, bear witness to his labour, necessity, and skill, and have the strife and sorrow and difficulties of human beings knit up with their old scarred stones. The things of Nature are sometimes too far above us, and too wonderful for us to grasp them, they are cold in their perfection, self-sufficient in their beauty or strength, but every man can to a certain extent,



CHANCEL OF ABBEY CHURCH.

understand and sympathize with the feelings, weaknesses, and difficulties of his fellow-men, and it is "the still, sad, music of humanity," that we listen to after all, above the singing of birds and the plashing of waters.

Therefore Adare, with all its sweetness of forest glade and glancing water, would be deserving of little notice, did no tradition attach to its fields, and no monument of past ages overshadow its flowers; but if the reader will have patience with me a little longer, I will show him that the true interest of the spot lies not so much in its sweeping elm-boughs as in the hoary ruins which they shade, and less in its sparkling wavelets than in the ancient stones they lave. Not far from the Manor itself, on a green slope falling gently to the water lie the ruins of a Franciscan abbey. The chief part of the building was raised in 1464 for the Observant Brothers by Thomas, Earl of Kildare, and Johanna his wife, in honour of St. Michael the Archangel; and it was completed by different devout persons whose names are all inscribed in an ancient register which was read out every Friday in the Chapter-house, that the friars might "pray for the health of their benefactors' souls." During the wars of the great "black" Earl of Desmond, the friars were expelled from their abbey, and Queen

Elizabeth bestowed the desecrated building on Wallop, a soldier of fortune, who allowed it to go to ruin. The Church was much grieved at losing her hold on an abbey which possessed such fat lands, so much fine timber, and had a river flowing near, so well-stocked with fish for Fridays and fast-days, and did her utmost to regain it. She succeeded, but at what precise period is not known; and in a letter from Justice Walsh to Burleigh, giving an account of "Ye state of M'onster altered by ye Erle of Desmond's actions," we find the first complaint to be "the Abbaye of Adare stored again with Friars." During the Civil wars in the reign of Charles I., the peace of the monks was again disturbed and the sanctity of their cloister violated. The Earl of Inchquin—"Murrrough of the conflagrations"—came down with fire and sword, sacked the abbey, carried off the plate, emptied the cellar, and finally slew the priest and burnt part of the building. In the glare of these flames we lose sight of the further history of Adare Abbey, but where records fail the imagination steps in to fill up the picture; and by glancing over its beautiful ruins we shall obtain a truer idea of its history than in poring over the dusty parchments which antiquaries have unearthed and garret-students deciphered.

Passing first under a ruined archway whose keystone bears the saltire of the Kildares, blazoned with orange and silver lichen, and then through a low and narrow doorway with a slab of gray limestone for porch, we leave the warmth and sunshine for shadow and chill air, and find ourselves suddenly transported from the nineteenth to the fifteenth century. Above our heads a tall, gray tower lifts itself into the sunshine which steeps its rugged brows in gold and brightens, too, the glossy plumage of the jackdaws who sit chattering at each angle; in front of us the blue sky is seen through the stone mullions of a noble, shafted window; at our feet the damp, dank grass starred by no daisies, (for no sunshine ever comes to drink its dewdrops) is chequered by old monumental slabs worn level with the ground, and on each side of us rise rugged walls, partly covered at the base by rude plaster but displaying at the top nothing but scarred stones, warmed and enlivened by every variety of moss and lichen. We are in the nave of the church, let the reader pause to look at the perfectly preserved sedilia, at the recessed tombs with their carved and crocketed finials, and then pass into the transept under one of the two pointed arches which, springing from an octagonal pillar, divides it from the nave. Facing us is one of the recesses above-mentioned, and we notice at once that the wall within it is stained and spotted with dull red. The imagination immediately conceives a scene of violence and bloodshed, and is in this case not wrong.

When the Cromwellian soldiers came down upon the abbey, the priest was saying Mass. On each side of the altar stood the little acolytes swinging their censers, in the body of the church knelt the faithful. Suddenly the low murmur of the Latin prayers and the wail of the *Miserere* were broken by the clatter of hoofs, by the clash of arms, and by the shouts of soldiery. Many a meek face grew pale within its cowl, many an attenuated hand grasped nervously at the crucifix, but the priest continued his murmuring as if he heard it not. In broke the soldiers. The timid monks were huddled together like a flock of sheep, the censers lie smoking on the pavement together with the rich plate snatched from the altar, the sacred building echoes to the tramping of armed heels, to the clang of steel, to the oaths and shouts of the fierce men, and the terrified cries of the friars. A torch is thrust into the roof, red flames begin to leap up, still the priest stands at the altar. Exasperated by the calmness and courage of the monk, Murrrough, the wild leader of the band strides up: his sword flashes in the red glare of the kindling rafters. Another moment, and the priest is being hounded down the nave and into the transept. He yet has time to fling his arms round the feet of the Virgin who smiles in her niche above the recess, and then falls, pierced by many sword thrusts. So Adare has a martyr of its own, and can proudly point to bloodstains more deeply red and more numerous than those which visitors to Holyrood strike matches to go down on their knees to discover.

In this same transept are two chantry-chapels, beautiful little places, each with its narrow lancet window, and its recess surmounted by carved foliage. More beautiful, I think, with a blackbird perched on the window-ledge for chorister, and a tapestry of green, red, and variegated ivy concealing the walls, than when the incense rose in fragrant clouds to the vaulted roof, and a circlet of tapers burned around the flower-wreathed image of the Virgin.

Nature is kind to ruins. When Time has taken from them the beauty and sub-

limity with which they were first endowed, when he has traced tracks in the polished stone, and stained the marble with lichen, when the painted window is broken and the tessellated pavement trodden down underfoot, the fresco peeled off, and the purple hanging rent away—when frost, wind, and rain are allowed unhindered to carry out their work of destruction, and none stays the falling stone, or props the tottering buttress—then she comes and puts up her hangings of green and gold, paints her frescoes with silver and scarlet, and lays down her pavement of emerald. Her gentle fingers soften the sharply-broken angle, and veil the scars and rents with waving flowers. She gives to the whole ruin a loveliness and a dignity which stir our hearts more deeply than all the pride of soaring turret and glistening masonry. More interesting than the nave are, I think, the little cloisters, though to them attaches no legend of bloodshed and rapine. They consist of a square surrounded by lofty walls, with a narrow gravel path running round it, and a plot of garden or "garth" in the centre which has a fine old yew overshadowing it, and is separated from the path by a low wall surmounted by a row of small, pointed arches, carried on double shafts. In the western wall is a small figure of St. Bridget, a most benign and bountiful lady, for if you will but bestow a kiss upon her old gray face she will grant any wish that you form at the moment. She looks exceedingly grim and fierce for a saint, I am bound to say, but then so many devout Catholics and superstitious persons of all sects have come by zealous kissing to obtain their hearts' desires, that her nose has been kissed off, poor thing, and her once smiling lips worn down to a mere slit. Such is this ungrateful world's reward for liberality—even when it flows from a saint! The romantic loveliness of this little cloister cannot be imagined except by those who have seen it. With the sable boughs of its ancient yew forming its roof, with its garden carpeted by blue and white spring violets, with its lofty walls shutting out the outer world, but not preventing a stray sunbeam or two from playing on the polished surface of its graceful arches, it is the calmest and most secluded spot imaginable, and expresses the very essence of monastic life. In some such cloister as this, I think, must those glorious visions of saints and angels, which he afterwards transferred in such glowing colours to his canvas, have appeared to Fra Angelico, and some such quiet nook as this within a convent's walls must have impressed by its holy calm the romantic soldier heart of Loyola.

Having now taken a glance at the dwelling of the monks, we will pass on to the proud castle over whose turrets the great Desmond once had sway, and through whose gateway the kerns of the Geraldines rode out on their errands of blood and fire. No particular date can be assigned for its building, but tradition says that it was raised by "Geoffroi de Morreis," 1226, and its architecture indicates a period not later than the close of the twelfth century. I shall not trouble the reader by referring to all the historical mentions of this castle, for they are so involved in the complicated and confused history of the civil wars and feuds constantly raging between Ireland's great families—Geraldines, Fitzgeralds, and Desmonds—that they would prove of no interest except to an antiquary or deeply-read student of Irish annals, and only puzzle and probably horrify the ordinary reader. I shall, therefore, only set down a few of the chief events with which it is connected.

In 1312 we read of a great banquet and joyous festival given at Adare by Baron FitzThomas. In 1314 it is conferred upon John Darcy, guardian to the young Earl of Kildare, by a grant from Edward III., and in 1519 Gerald, ninth Earl of Kildare, sets out from Adare to meet the charges brought against him by Cardinal Wolsey. The year 1535 sees the rebellion of Thomas, the tenth Earl, and all his lands being attainted, the Earl of Desmond takes possession of the "castels in the countie of Lymeryk" and holds them till 1583. About this time the celebrated Severus, Dean of St. Patrick's, is deprived of his deanery because he refuses to take the Oath of Supremacy, and flying to Desmond Castle is there hospitably received and concealed.

In the wars which terminated in the death of the unfortunate Earl of Desmond, Adare is frequently mentioned as the scene of skirmishes, sorties, and attacks; and in 1578 we find that it is taken by the English after a siege of eleven days. The following year Captain Mallery defeats the Geraldines at Manisteranena, and stations an English garrison in Desmond Castle. Hooker's *Continuations of Hollinshed* gives a curious description of a combat between the garrison, consisting of 120 men, and Sir James Desmond's force of 430, in which the English defeat the Irish after eight hours' hard fighting and kill more than fifty of the enemy without losing one man! Remember,

credulous reader, that the historian is English! Then follows a long piece of confused history—we read of civil wars, massacres, insurrections, plots, sieges, and skirmishes, till we are sick of bloodshed—and I think the reader will gladly agree to skip over this period.

We must notice, however, that the English still held Desmond Castle in 1581, but the following year Desmond, supposed to be dead or beyond the seas, suddenly reappears at the head of a large force, marches to Adare, beleaguers the garrison, and regains possession of his stronghold. Here he remains till the end of the year, “caring neither for tillage nor reaping, but the reaping of the Butlers by day and by night, so that the lowing of a cow, or the voice of a ploughman was not heard from Dun-casine to Cashel.” 1583 sees the bloody career of this wild Earl cut short in Castle Island. The next notice we have of Adare is in 1599, when Essex marches into Munster to attack the Geraldines. He encamps his army on the banks of the Maigne, but the troops of



RUINS OF DESMOND CASTLE, ADARE.

Desmond sally forth from the castle, and joining the Geraldines so harass his force that he can make no further progress and camps at Askeaton. 1600 sees Adare still held by a Desmond, but in the same year Sir George Carew takes it and holds it through a long siege, during which the garrison could only obtain water by excavating a subterranean passage to the bed of the river. In 1641 the castle is again seized by insurgents, and they hold it till the Earl of Castlehaven drives them out. Finally, in 1657, Protector Cromwell gives an order to dismantle Desmond Castle. Such is a very brief outline of the history of this castle.

Like all Irish strongholds—for when has unfortunate Ireland ever been at peace?—it was the scene of perpetual warfare. Held by the Geraldines for a month, by the Desmonds the next, having England's banner floating over the keep at sunset, and “Thanet-a-boo” ringing on the courts at sunrise.

Ah, if that old gray keep, and if those grass-grown courts could speak, what tales would they not tell of sieges and scalings, of triumphant sorties, and bloodstained retreats! Of deeds of heroism done in crumbling breaches, of traitorous plots hatched in the dead of night, of women's tears shed over flaming homes and slaughtered

heroes, of the wail of captives fettered in the dark, damp dungeon. They have watched and taken part in the history of a whole country, those old scarred stones, nor are they wholly silent. Through their scars and fire stains, and crumbling they speak to us, and if we listen with sympathy, they will tell us things that remain unknown to those whose very lives have been spent over the annals of the past. Even should the reader be but very slightly acquainted with the different styles of architecture, I think that on entering the outer ward of Desmond Castle, and looking up at the ruins around him, he would immediately recognize in their every line the characteristics of the Norman period. The broad, square keep, massive and gray and weather-beaten as a rock, tracing itself against the sky in outlines like those of a natural cliff, and pierced here and there with dark slits, where the daws rear their chattering families, but through which many an arrow once whizzed forth on its errand of death—the rude, and crag-like solidity of encircling walls and battlements—the low-browed entrance to the keep and the dark, gloomy dungeons within—the exceeding roughness and simplicity of the mouldings of doors and windows—these and many other peculiarities tell at once to what early period the fine old structure belongs. There is not the slightest attempt to decorate or beautify any part of the building, except the banqueting hall by a two-light window with cusped heads. Everything is as simple, as solid and as strong as possible.

In those days men built for shelter and protection, and of necessity alone. They did not build for the sake of having beautiful places to dwell in, they would just as soon have made the greenwood tree their roof, and the river-bank their hall; but a sharp arrow could pierce the foliage of the tree and a sharp sword-thrust be dealt upon the river's bank, and as arrows were then constantly flying about, and swords never rested in their scabbards, they wanted some places where they could get out of the way of these weapons and hurl them at other people. So they built in the style best suited to their necessities without giving a thought to its appearance. The keep so high—not because it would rise nobly above the woods and be a fine object in the landscape—but because from the top of it, the warder would be able to see for many miles the glitter of a lance, or the moving of a troop of horsemen; the walls thus battlemented not because it gave them a grand and craggy appearance, but because it rendered them easier to aim from, and less easy to scale. They had no time, those stirring men, whose life was spent with foot in stirrup and lance in hand, to enjoy the beautiful, to study Nature, to cherish fancies and carve them in stone. Warfare was their occupation, plundering their pleasure, deep-drinking in the hall their rest and relaxation. Trees were only known to them as supplying tough wood for spear-handles, herbs and flowers as making healing balsams for wounds, buildings as places to store plunder and get out of the way of arrows in. So they raised these buildings as quickly and strongly as they could, and used them just as the animals do their dens, as shelters against the hunters and the elements, having no more idea that they were doing anything grand and noble, than the chaffinch has that its nest is a miracle of woven loveliness.

But they did do something great and noble. Every work which fulfils the purpose for which it was wrought, perfectly and simply and fully, is good and noble work;



JOHN EDWARDS, PHOTO.

WINDHAM THOMAS, FOURTH EARL OF DUNRAVEN.

and this rude old Norman architecture exactly meeting all the requirements of that age, appeals to us by its simplicity, as the elaborate buildings of Flamboyant, Gothic, and all the pedimented porches of the Renaissance fail to do. It is so honest and straightforward. It tells its story so plainly. It tells us all about the wild days which gave it birth, about the necessities and difficulties and toils of the men who raised it, about the insurrections and feuds and wars which brought about its building. It is noble architecture, also, because it bears, as every good work does, the impress of its builders on every line and stone. The latest school of Gothic is weak, false, and redundant, because its founders were weak men, unbelievers, full of false, over-driven sentimentalism. The Norman style is simple, massive and grand, because the Normans were simple, sound-hearted, and true, morally and physically grand. Therefore I think, did the reader stand under the archway of Desmond Castle and look up to its keep and round to its battlements he would feel love and reverence spring up in his heart towards the gray majesty of the ancient tower, and the gloomy strength of its encircling walls. Having said that Desmond Castle is a perfect type of an early Norman fortress, I need waste no time on further description of it, as that type is well known to every one, but I must direct the reader's attention to part of the building to which a gloomy legend clings.

The ruins of the banqueting hall are very large, and have several windows overlooking the river, as well as a tall, narrow doorway. Two or three broken steps lead from this doorway to the water's edge, and here, every night glides a monk, tall, thin, and sinister-looking, with a red cloak flowing over his emaciated limbs, and a great book clasped in his hands. For a few moments he stands on the steps, watching the moving blackness at his feet, and then, without word or warning, plunges himself headlong into the stream. No reason is given for this nightly recurring suicide, no legend helps us to decipher the lines of remorse and woe traced upon the brow of this poor ghost, and we can only conjecture that some deed, unusually dark, even in those dark ages, drives the sin-stained soul of the wretched friar to revisit the scene of his crime and self-revenge.

Before we leave the Castle, I would bid the reader admire with me, the beauty of its site. It stands on the very brink of the river; its foundations are set deep in the water, and its rugged walls, massive buttresses and ivy-wreathed turrets, are reflected leaf for leaf and stone for stone in the clear, tremulous mirror. The glancing of the bright stream beneath the grim, gray fortress, the sparkle of the weir round the foot of its tower, the sweet, monotonous cadence of the ripples as they plash against the old stones, the beauty of those long reflections—quivering streaks of gray and green cast deep down into azure—increase the loveliness and romance of the scene tenfold.

A moralist, as he watched the swift flowing of the river, could hardly fail to dwell once more on that well-worn theme—the fleeting character of human life—and as he glanced from silver stream to mighty tower reflect upon the generations that have lived and passed away since first the gray shadow darkened the silver current. Yes, the terror of Black Desmond's name is passed away, and the young Lord Thomas sleeps at Rouen, his sorrows at an end, the war-cry of the Geraldines is heard only in the refrain of a ballad crooned over the cottage fire on Christmas night, but still the Maigne flows on, as swift and full as in the days when it rolled red to the Shannon, and still the old keep rears its massive brow into the sunshine, though the birds build in its loopholes, and the rabbits play around its walls, once defended by the life-blood of heroes.

And now the reader has passed with me through the fairest spots of this quiet valley of Adare. I have shown him my home as it appears to me, I have led him to all my favourite haunts. If I have erred in supposing that Adare possesses enough interest and beauty to be worthy of attention from a wider circle than that of its inhabitants, my error, fostered by a natural love of my home, will be, I hope, by virtue of its cause, readily forgiven; but, if there is in this brief sketch anything to amuse or interest one reader, if some one carries away but one idea of the loveliness of a simple Irish valley, or is brightened for one moment by the thought of its quiet pleasures, my own joy in the scenes around me will be infinitely greater, and my first effort in the path of literature perhaps not altogether fruitless.